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FIRST (ECONOMIC) COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 4th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 23 April 1981, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KOMATINA (Yugoslavia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

STATISTICAL QUESTIONS (E/1981/12) (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution I, entitled "1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics" (E/1981/12).

2. It was so decided.

3. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had agreed to delete the third preambular paragraph of draft resolution II, entitled "International Energy Statistics". If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution, as amended.

4. It was so decided.

5. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft decisions A, B and C.

6. It was so decided.

7. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of item 13.

POPULATION QUESTIONS (A/36/117; E/1981/13, E/1981/40; E/1981/C.1/L.1) (continued)

8. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to postpone its consideration of draft resolution I, entitled "Convening of a World Population Conference in 1984" (E/1981/12), until the second regular session of the Council.

9. It was so decided.

10. Mr. VELLOSO (Brazil) asked whether, when formulating the recommendation in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, the Population Commission had considered other possibilities. The fact that 10 years had elapsed since the last United Nations World Population Conference did not in itself justify the convening of a new Conference.

11. The formulation of the draft resolution was somewhat ambiguous, since in paragraph 1 it recommended to the General Assembly the convening of the Conference, but in the remaining paragraphs the Economic and Social Council itself would be taking action on the matter. His delegation agreed fully with the principle embodied in paragraph 6, but wondered if the Population Commission had considered ways of involving States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies in the preparations for the Conference. With regard to paragraph 10, he felt that the Secretary-General's criteria for convening an expert group, which were set forth in document E/1981/40, should be expressed

(Mr. Velloso, Brazil)

more clearly in the draft resolution. The cost of public information activities for the Conference, as listed in document E/1981/40, annex I, item H, amounted to 20 per cent of the total cost for the Conference. Those activities had not been defined, and he suggested that details on them should be submitted to the second regular session of the Council.

12. Mr. SACH (Budget Division) said that a corrigendum to document E/1981/40 would be issued. An error had been made in calculating the total estimated cost for the Conference. Instead of the figure $3,300,000 appearing in annex I, the correct figure was $3,009,200. The change was due to re-estimates of additional requirements for the Santiago and Bangkok meetings, according to which the total cost of the Santiago meeting would decline from $268,300 to $207,200 and costs for the Bangkok meeting would be reduced from $391,900 to $162,200.

13. Ms. DOSS (Director, Division for Economic and Social Information) said that public information could play a key role in preparing the climate for conferences and designated years and enhancing the impact of the decisions taken. Her Department (DPI) was still working out the details of a joint action programme with its sister agencies, but the philosophy behind the programme was that public information could be a valuable tool for mobilizing understanding and support for issues, not only among the general public but also on the part of policy-makers, and ensuring that the decisions of conferences were followed up. Media activities were only one part of the action programme. Population issues were closely intertwined with many other economic and social issues, such as environment, development, human rights, urbanization, women and youth, and DPI wished to focus on those problems as well. One way of doing so was by commissioning world-famous experts to prepare briefing papers and lectures focusing on unmet needs, new approaches and alternative solutions. Another activity would be support for national and local groups through training fellowships which could encourage the fellowship holders to return to their countries and help to develop and improve national programmes and activities. A world population atlas would also be published and would stress progress made since 1974. Panel discussions and television debates on the issues would be held, and research projects carried out in schools and universities would be the basis for international exchanges of information. Various types of publications would be issued and action would be taken in the audio-visual field. DPI viewed its role as an integral part of the Conference rather than a simple publicity effort.

14. She noted in conclusion that, although austerity had been called for at the last World Population Conference, the information programme alone had cost over $1 million.

15. Mr. TABAH (Director, Population Division), replying to the first question from the representative of Brazil, said that the Population Commission believed there was a need for a World Population Conference in 1984 because in the past decade many changes had taken place in the world population situation. For instance, many African countries were in alarming straits owing to increases in mortality and fertility and housing problems. Furthermore, the implementation over the past 10 years of the World Population Plan of Action needed to be monitored and

(Mr. Tabah, Population Division)

Governments should be encouraged to take steps in accordance with their national policies. With regard to the question on expert groups, he said that such groups, selected on the basis of broad geographical and philosophical diversity, had worked intensively in the preparations for the 1974 Conference.

16. Mr. EHRMANN (United Kingdom) said he wondered whether the information just provided by Ms. Doss could be included in an addendum to the paper to be submitted to the second regular session. He requested clarification from the representative of the Budget Division on the figure of $3,009,200 quoted as representing the total cost of the Conference.

17. Mr. ELHASSAN (Sudan) asked if Ms. Doss could provide a breakdown of the figure of $600,000 mentioned for public information activities.

18. Ms. DOSS (Director, Division for Economic and Social Information) replied that a detailed breakdown was impossible at present because DPI was still working out the division of labour with its sister agencies. In response to the representative of the United Kingdom, she said that the information could certainly be issued for the second regular session.

19. Mr. SACH (Budget Division) said that the reduction in total costs was $290,800, so the revised estimate was $3,009,200.

20. Mr. LUTFI (Jordan) said that the inflation rates listed in annex II for 1982 and 1983 were different for the various activities and requested clarification. He assumed that Arabic would be a working language of the Conference but it was not included in the language costs listed. He had ascertained that the additional cost represented by Arabic would be around $338,000, and suggested that that figure should be reflected in the document.

21. He also wondered whether a World Population Conference was really necessary and whether the issues might not more effectively be discussed in an ad hoc committee of the United Nations.

22. Mr. ESAN (Nigeria) said that it had been decided that the relevance of the Conference should be taken up at the second regular session, and that matter should not be brought up now. His delegation supported the idea of a World Population Conference because population problems were still grave, especially in some regions, and required the type of action which a Conference could propose.

23. Miss COURSON (France) said that her delegation had no objection to the postponing of the consideration and adoption of draft resolution I until the second regular session. However, the Committee must keep in mind the fact that the need for a World Population Conference had been expressed by an independent body, the Population Commission. She hoped that all necessary steps would be taken to ensure that the Conference was held in 1984 on a cost-effective basis.

24. Mr. SACH (Budget Division), replying to the question from the representative of Jordan, said that the inflation rates shown in annex II reflected those used to compute the 1982-1983 proposed programme budget. The rates were lower for 1983 than for 1982, and those for New York were higher than those for Geneva. Conference services for the first three meetings listed in the annex were to be provided by New York-based conference services staff, and the inflation rates for New York had been used in calculating the total cost of those meetings. Conference services for the final three meetings listed in the annex were to be provided by Geneva-based conference services staff, and accordingly reflected the lower inflation rate for Geneva.

25. With regard to cost estimates for Arabic language services, the Budget Division's standard practice was to furnish calculations of costs for a sixth language only upon written request in the form of a draft resolution.

26. Mr. ABDALLAH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the General Assembly had adopted a resolution calling for Arabic to be made an official language of the Economic and Social Council by 1982. Since the Conference would be held in 1984, Arabic language services should be included in the estimates and his delegation would favour amending draft resolution I to include the formal request referred to by Mr. Sach.

27. Mr. LAZAREVIC (Yugoslavia) said that the inclusion of Arabic should not be discussed at the current meeting and that the Secretariat should be authorized to indicate in its paper for the second regular session that Arabic language costs might have to be added to the total cost for the Conference.

28. The CHAIRMAN said that he had certain proposals to make on the agenda item under discussion.

29. Mr. BRECHER (United States of America) and Miss FORD (Canada) requested that the proposals should be made available in writing to enable their delegations to give them due consideration.

30. Miss COURSON (France) said that, as a matter of principle, the proposals should be circulated in all of the Council's working languages.

31. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would make the necessary arrangements.

32. He invited the Committee to consider draft resolution II ("Strengthening of actions concerned with the fulfilment of the World Plan of Action").

33. Mrs. RAVN (Norway) proposed the following amendment:

> "Urges the Secretary-General, UNFPA and other international bodies concerned to continue supporting the World Fertility Survey to ensure that fertility and family planning data are collected and analysed as required, inter alia, for monitoring of the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action;".

(Mrs. Ravn, Norway)

34. Her delegation wished to know whether that amendment had any financial implications.

35. Mr. TABAH (Director, Population Division) said that the proposal had no financial implications.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution, as amended.

37. It was so decided.

38. The CHAIRMAN, referring to draft resolution III, entitled "Work programme in the field of population", said that at the previous day's informal meeting it had been agreed to amend paragraph 2 (p) by replacing the words "In the event of a forthcoming World Population Conference" by "to continue".

39. Mr. VELLOSO (Brazil) said that, since decisions on the Conference had been postponed to the second regular session, he wished to propose the deletion from paragraph 2 (p) of the words "at a time that would enable a report on the results of the inquiry to be submitted to the Conference;".

40. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution, as amended.

41. It was so decided.

42. The CHAIRMAN said that an informal agreement had also been reached to postpone taking action on the provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Commission, as contained in draft decision B of the Commission's report. If he heard no objection, he would take it that such was the Committee's wish.

43. It was so decided.

44. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take note of the report of the Population Commission on the work of its twenty-first session.

45. It was so decided.

46. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the world population situation in 1981 (A/36/117).

47. It was so decided.

TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS (continued) (E/1981/35; E/1981/C.1/L.2)

48. Mr. DUVAL (Budget Division) said that at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly the Fifth Committee had been advised that publication of the recommendations of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods would cost some $83,000. It had been assumed at that time that the recommendations

(Mr. Duval, Budget Division)

would be printed internally at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The information on which that assumption had been based had appeared valid until recently.

49. Miss EVANS (United Kingdom) said that her delegation wished to know exactly why the recommendations could not be published immediately. They were ready for publication, and a resolution of the Council was being ignored.

50. Mr. GUEYE (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs) said that there was no financial problem in publishing the recommendations. They might require some final work but should be published in the near future.

51. Mr. METELITS (United States of America) said that the Council had taken a decision on the matter which had been endorsed by the General Assembly, yet the recommendations had still not been published. No further delay was acceptable.

52. Miss COURSON (France) said that members of the Secretariat were passing the blame back and forth. Her delegation trusted that the problems would be speedily resolved.

53. Mr. GUEYE (Department of International Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Secretariat was awaiting a reply from the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) to see what assistance might be required to finalize publication.

54. Mr. IKANI (United Republic of Cameroon) said that he was astounded to find that Council decisions had been disregarded by those whose responsibility it was to implement them. The excuses proferred were worthless. The situation was establishing a dangerous precedent.

55. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that it was important to develop international co-operation in the transport of dangerous goods. The Soviet Union played an active role in organs dealing with that subject. It was, for example, widely known that in the final clauses of the Helsinki Agreement the Soviet Union had taken initiatives relating to the transport of dangerous goods.

56. His delegation appreciated the work of the Committee of Experts. The proposed international convention on the transport of dangerous goods by all modes of transport would improve safety conditions and help to reduce pollution.

57. Funds for the publication of the recommendations of the Committee of Experts should be provided from existing resources. The decision to publish the recommendations had been taken at the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly, and the Secretariat should ensure that they were published forthwith.

58. His delegation considered the proposed programme for the future work of the Committee and its working groups acceptable.

59. Mr. PAW U (Chief, Regional Commissions Liaison Unit) said that the study was ready for publication, which had been assigned to ECE.

60. Mr. SCHLAFF (Executive Officer, Department of Conference Services) explained that in May 1979 it had been estimated that the cost of publication would be $190,000. The estimates had been based on the assumption that the work would be offered to external contractors, since neither Headquarters nor the United Nations Office at Geneva could do the printing. In October 1979 the Fifth Committee had been informed that the most cost effective way of publishing the recommendations would be for the Geneva Office to publish the recommendations internally, in which case some $83,000 would be necessary.

61. Preparations for publication were almost complete. Yet the particular format of the recommendations made it impossible to print them at the United Nations, so that additional funds were required for external publication. If internal publication were preferred, a less satisfactory format would have to be adopted.

62. Mr. METELITS (United States of America) said that the Secretariat might have better employed the energy it had devoted to manufacturing excuses to the publication of the recommendations. The situation was entirely unsatisfactory.

63. Mr. STUART (United Kingdom) noted that the Fifth Committee had been informed in document A/C.5/34/18, annex I, paragraph 10.3 that the Secretary-General intended to have the document printed internally in the United Nations Office at Geneva. Had the Secretary-General been aware, at the time, of the difficulties of which the Council had just been informed? The Council was being faced with a stark choice: having the document printed in an unsatisfactory manner or facing up to the need to provide additional appropriations. Why had the Secretary-General intended, in 1979, to have the document printed internally, despite the disadvantages of such a procedure, and why was it impossible to redeploy funds within the considerable resources of section 29 of the programme budget to finance that relatively small expenditure?

64. Mr. DUVAL (Budget Division) replied that the revised estimates submitted to the General Assembly had been based on the information available at that time. The Secretary-General had at no time indicated that there would be no financial implications involved in publication of the document but had merely stated that it was not possible to establish to what extent the costs could be absorbed from within the totality of the provisions made under section 29 and that he would return to the matter within the context of the first performance report.

65. Mr. BRECHER (United States of America) pointed out that the Secretary-General made proposals but it was for Member States to take decisions on the proposals. In the case before the Council the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) had made a clear recommendation which had been approved by the Fifth Committee and the plenary Assembly. The Secretariat simply had not taken the necessary action. If the Department of Conference Services had known that it would need a certain amount for a specific purpose it should have put that amount aside. The present situation was unacceptable.

66. Mr. SHAPOVALOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that he could not but agree. As he understood it, the Council had been given all the technical details in 1979. Why had the Secretariat not made any effort so far to implement

(Mr. Shapovalov, USSR)

a decision adopted by the Council two years earlier? That mistake must be corrected and no additional funding must be provided for the purpose.

67. Mr. SCHLAFF (Executive Officer, Department of Conference Services) said that he was not in a position to explain how the Secretariat had arrived at its present position. He had the responsibility of informing the Council that, if the document was to be printed in its present format, it would have to be printed externally and an additional appropriation of approximately $125,000 would be required. There appeared to be three alternatives: (1) the printing could be done internally at the Geneva Office but the document would have a different format, and would be less useful; (2) additional appropriations, based on the estimate just quoted, could be made available so that the document could be printed externally; (3) on the instructions of ACABQ some other document which had been scheduled for printing externally and for which appropriations had been made could be cancelled so as to make the necessary funds available.

68. Mr. LAZAREVIC (Yugoslavia) expressed regret at the fact that implementation of a decision of the General Assembly and of the Council had been delayed so long. The Council must now decide how to resolve the issue. His delegation would prefer no additional expenditure to be incurred.

69. Mr. BRECHER (United States of America) introduced draft resolution E/1981/C.1/L.2 on behalf of the United Kingdom delegation and his own delegation. He drew attention to paragraphs 2 and 3, which dealt with substantive issues, and to paragraph 6, which focused on the need to ensure appropriate dissemination of the results of the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. Subparagraph 6 (b) was particularly important. Finally, he informed the Council that Canada and the Netherlands had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

70. Miss EVANS (United Kingdom), commenting on the point made by the representative of the Department of Conference Services that there might be a role for ACABQ, said that as two years had elapsed since the resolution in question had been adopted the publication of the report of the Committee of Experts had acquired an urgent character. Accordingly, she proposed that ACABQ should be asked to look into the question as a matter of urgency. Leaving aside the possibility of using funds intended for the external publication of another document, ACABQ should try to see whether there was not alternative financing available under section 29 of the programme budget.

71. Her delegation attached importance to the issue before the Council because the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods was the foremost authority in the field and had spent much time and effort on becoming so. The International Civil Aviation Organization had nearly completed its recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods and they were based fully on the United Nations system. Similarly the European road and rail transport agreements were being brought into line with United Nations regulations, and many national regulations including those of her own country had been or were being drafted on the basis of the work done at the United Nations. That was of enormous importance as regards

(Miss Evans, United Kingdom)

the commercial listing, classification and packaging of dangerous goods. The recommendations of the Committee of Experts had last been issued in 1977 and were out of date as much technical progress had taken place since then. It was essential that the revised recommendations should be published. Her delegation expressed regret at the administrative oversight which had prevented their publication so far and entirely associated itself with the remarks made by the representative of the United States in introducing draft resolution E/1981/C.1/L.2.

72. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to ask ACABQ to look into the question of the publication of the revised recommendations as a matter of urgency.

73. It was so decided.

74. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt draft resolution E/1981/C.1/L.2.

75. Draft resolution E/1981/C.1/L.2 was adopted.

76. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Council had concluded its consideration of item 15.

UNIFIED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS AND PLANNING (A/36/69; E/1981/26)

77. Mr. SHAPOVALOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation attached great importance to the comprehensive discussion, within the United Nations, of the question of a unified approach to development analysis and planning. Experience in the socialist countries had demonstrated that integrated planning on a national scale was the only effective method of achieving economic and social development and raising cultural and material living standards. The economic and social development policy adopted by the Party at the twenty-sixth Congress encompassed a large-scale social development programme designed to promote economic growth and improve the well-being of the people through gradual development of the economy, acceleration of scientific and technical progress and more rational use of potential. The Soviet Union had introduced the idea of a unified approach within the United Nations.

78. The Commission for Social Development had devoted considerable attention to the subject at its twenty-seventh session and had submitted two important draft resolutions: draft resolution VI on emerging social issues of international concern and draft resolution XI on the social aspects of the development activities of the United Nations. He drew attention, in particular, to paragraphs 3 and 7 of the latter. The unified approach to development was reflected in General Assembly resolution 3409 (XXX), in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, in the International Development Strategy and in other documents. The Council could make an important contribution by considering the question of a unified approach on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the instructions set forth in General Assembly resolution 3409 (XXX) requesting suggestions /.../ on the practical application of a unified approach to development had not been adequately implemented, as the

(Mr. Shapovalov, USSR)

Council had simply been provided with information supplied by Governments and some negative recommendations. It was therefore important that the Council should take a decision at the current session on the further work of the United Nations in that field. The importance of a unified approach to development was stressed in paragraph 42 of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. His delegation would be grateful if the Chairman could introduce a draft decision on the continuation of work on a unified approach to development planning, so that the Council could adopt a positive approach.

79. Mr. BRECHER (United States of America) said that, in the light of past experience, his delegation wished to emphasize the importance of improving institutional co-ordination at the national and international levels drawing, in particular, on the experience of the 1960s and the 1970s which had demonstrated the need to avoid relying too heavily on Governments in the promotion of social development. His delegation felt that the institutions should encourage individual and group initiatives instead.

80. Mr. EHRMANN (United Kingdom) said that his delegation fully supported the view, expressed in paragraph 42 of General Assembly resolution 35/56, that development was an integral process, embodying both economic and social objectives. Since the resolution had been adopted by consensus it could be assumed that all delegations would agree with that statement. Therefore it seemed strange that the Secretary-General should have separated the part of the Secretariat concerned with social development from the part dealing with economic development. In view of the exhortation contained in the International Development Strategy, he wondered whether the Secretary-General planned to bring the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs back to New York.

81. Mr. VORONIN (Secretary of the Committee) said that he would draw the attention of the representative of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs to the matter.

82. The CHAIRMAN announced that he had prepared, on the basis of consultations, a draft resolution which would be circulated to all delegations.

83. Mr. HANKEY (Canada) said that he trusted that any financial implications would be communicated to the Council before it was asked to adopt any decision on the matter.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.